

9 Writing a literary argument from memory – Part 2

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English

Write it 3 times (English)

specific moments

recursive

Recall

- You have written about a book without it in front of you.
- You have remembered a scene vaguely and could not use it.
- You know a prompt asks for something specific.

New ideas

Read these first. Each idea has a short worked example. Then do the Practice below.

■ 1 Answering the prompt

A thesis must contain the prompt's own terms redescribed as a claim about this text. If the thesis could stand unchanged under a different prompt, it is answering the novel, not the question.

Worked example. A strong claim about a novel that ignores the prompt is a good answer to a question nobody asked.

■ 2 Preparing evidence

In a literary-argument essay the book is not available. Prepare a handful of **specific moments** - a decision, an image, an exchange - known precisely enough to describe.

Worked example. A precisely described remembered scene is admissible evidence; a

vague gesture at the novel is not.

■ 3 The order the process takes

Developing an interpretation is **recursive** : it can emerge from analysing evidence, or from forming a line of reasoning and then finding evidence. With a remembered text the second order is usually forced, and it is legitimate.

Worked example. Deciding the argument first and then recalling the scenes that support it is a normal working order.

Watch out: Never write about a text you cannot describe in detail. A general impression of a novel supports no claim a reader could check.

Practice

2.1 State what a thesis must contain in a literary-argument essay. [2]

2.2 State the test for whether a thesis answers the prompt. [2]

2.3 State what should be prepared for a text you will write about. [2]

2.4 Explain why a vague gesture at a novel is not evidence. [2]

2.5 State the two orders the recursive process permits. [2]
